

**READING HABITS AMONG CHILDREN IN NIAH LONGHOUSES IN
SARAWAK**

NANGKU ANAK NGENDANG

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
(TESL)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
(2009)

BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS

Gred:JUDUL : **READING HABITS AMONG CHILDREN IN NIAH LONGHOUSES IN SARAWAK**SESI PENGAJIAN : **2008/2009**Saya NANGKU ANAK NGENDANG
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(TANDATANGAN PENULIS)_____
(TANDATANGAN PENYELIA)

Alamat Tetap:

RH STEPHAN JUGAM,
SG SEBUBOK, ULU NIAH,
98200 NIAH, MIRI, SARAWAK

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Received for examination by:

(Mdm. Rosnah Mustafa)

Date:

()

Gred

Statement of Originality

The work described in this Final Year Project, entitled
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is to the best of the author’s knowledge that of the author except
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(Date submitted)

(Student’s signature)
Nangku anak Ngendang
14646

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, glory to God almighty for giving me strengths, patience and determination to complete this final year project.

My heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Madam Rosnah Mustafa for her continuous support, guidance, comments and precious times throughout the research. Without her, I would not have been able to proceed and complete my final year project.

To all the respondents, your contribution in this project is very much appreciated. Without your contribution, this project would not be able to be carried to the end.

To the most precious people in my life, I would like to take this opportunity to say my appreciation to my mother, for her constant supports and unconditional love. To my wonderful sisters and brother, your support will be remembered for the rest of my life. The research also dedicated to my father, whose absence is greatly missed but whose footprints are forever imprinted in my heart.

Last but not least, to all my friends for their willingness to share ideas and precious comments to complete the project.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MILS - Malaysian International Literature Society

SPBT - *Skim Pinjaman Buku Teks*

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

ABSTRACT

[READING HABITS AMONG CHILDREN IN NIAH LONGHOUSES IN SARAWAK]

Nangku anak Ngendang

14646

This study is a survey that intends to investigate the existing reading habits among children in Niah longhouses in Sarawak. In order to find out the children's reading frequency, the survey elicited information on the amount of time spent for reading or how frequent do they read. Besides, this study identified the types of reading materials that the students usually read and the reason of choosing the reading materials. On the other hand, the study also discovered the factors that influence the children's reading habits either the factors encouraging or discouraging their reading habits. Lastly, this study aimed to find if there are any relationships between the children's reading habits and their achievement in school. The samples for this study were 25 children and their parents/guardians from six selected longhouses in the area. Generally, the children have very positive attitudes towards reading for pleasure. The findings of the study revealed that generally, 84% of the children have spent some amount of time for pleasure reading which is 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 1 hour, 2 hours and 3 hours. However, the study indicated that the children still did not have good reading habits even though they have positive attitudes towards reading. On the other hand, schools, family and friends were identified as the sources of the reading materials for the children. The study also revealed the types of reading materials read by the children were divided into two, which were materials for academic reading (i.e. textbook) and materials for non-academic reading (i.e. comic, novel, magazines, storybooks and newspaper). Besides, encouragement given by those around the children, self interest, availability and accessibility of reading materials, and modeling other's action were identified as the factors encouraging their reading habits. Meanwhile, the study also found out the children's illiteracy and laziness were the factors that hindered the children from reading. Moreover, there were significant relationships between the children's reading habits with their achievement in school despite they have admitted it help them in their study.

ABSTRAK

[KAJIAN TABIAT MEMBACA DI KALANGAN KANAK-KANAK DI RUMAH-RUMAH PANJANG NIAH DI SARAWAK]

Nangku anak Ngendang
14646

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji tabiat membaca kanak-kanak yang tinggal di rumah-rumah panjang Niah, di Sarawak. Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti kekerapan membaca kanak-kanak iaitu jumlah masa yang diperuntukkan untuk membaca. Selain itu, kajian ini juga turut menegenalpasti jenis-jenis bahan bacaan yang biasa dibaca oleh kanak-kanak tersebut serta sebab-sebab memilih bahan bacaan tersebut. . Selain itu, kajian ini juga mengkaji factor-faktor yang mempengaruhi minat membaca kanak-kanak tersebut iaitu factor-faktor yang menggalakkan membaca dan juga factor-faktor yang mengekang minat membaca mereka. Akhir sekali, kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk memperoleh maklumat mengenai hubungkait antara tabiat membaca kanak-kanak tersebut dengan pencapaian mereka di sekolah. Kajian ini melibatkan 25 orang kanak-kanak termasuk ibu bapa/penjaga mereka dari 6 rumah-rumah panjang yang telah dipilih. Hasil kajian ini memperlihatkan kanak-kanak meluangkan Secara umumnya, kanak-kanak tersebut mempunyai tabiat yang positif terhadap membaca bagi tujuan hiburan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan 84% daripada kanak-kanak tersebut meluangkan masa-masa tertentu untuk membaca bagi tujuan keseronokan pada masa lapang iaitu selama 20 minit, 30 minit, 1 jam, 2 jam dan 3 jam. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian ini menunjukkan kanak-kanak tersebut masih tidak mempunyai tabiat membaca bagi tujuan hiburan yang bagus walaupun mereka mempunyai sikap yang positif terhadap tabiat membaca. Selain daripada itu, kajian ini telah mengenalpasti sekolah, keluarga dan rakan-rakan sebagai sumber utama bahan bacaan kanak-kanak tersebut. Kajian ini juga telah memperlihatkan jenis-jenis bahan bacaan yang dibaca oleh kanak-kanak tersebut. Bahan-bahan bacaan tersebut dikategorikan kepada dua; iaitu bahan bacaan untuk tujuan akademik (yang merujuk pada buku teks) dan bahan-bahan bacaan bukan untuk tujuan akademik (merujuk kepada komik, novel, majalah, buku cerita, dan surat khabar). Penemuan lain hasil kajian juga telah mengenalpasti sokongan yang diberikan oleh orang-orang di sekeliling mereka, minat sendiri, kesenangan mendapat bahan bacaan, dan terdapatnya contoh-contoh individu yang suka membaca merupakan faktor yang telah merangsang minat mereka untuk membaca. Pada masa yang sama, masalah buta huruf dan sikap malas kanak-kanak tersebut telah dikenalpasti sebagai factor yang mengekang minat mereka untuk membaca. Akhir sekali, kajian ini telah memperlihatkan bahawa tidak ada hubungkait antara tabiat membaca kanak-kanak tersebut dengan pencapaian mereka di sekolah walaupun mereka mengakui bahawa membaca untuk tujuan hiburan dapat membantu mereka di dalam pelajaran.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter sets out to review condition of the longhouses, background of the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives, research questions, and significance of the study. Furthermore, the operational definition of terms and scope of the study also discussed. The last part of the chapter is the chapter review.

1.1 Condition of the Longhouses

This study involved the children of Iban community in six selected longhouses in Niah, Miri division. Meanwhile, Ulu Niah is considered as rural area. The location of the longhouses is in Ulu Niah and located near two small towns named Niah and Simpang Ngu. The trip to the longhouses takes about 1 and 30 minutes from Miri city, and 2 hours from Bintulu. Thus, the longhouses also have easy access to the towns as the also have tarred road. In term if the facilities, the longhouses do not have opportunity to get electricity supply except two longhouses. They relies on the electricity which supplied by their own generator which is operated in the nights. However, during the research is conducted, the electricity supply is in progress. Besides, all of the longhouses are depending on rain water and the nearest

river for the water source. They did not have opportunity to get treated water from the logy.

Due to the easy access to the outside areas, the people in the longhouses also develop in many ways. Some of the youth in the longhouses are educated and have completed their studies and doing a good work such as teachers and estates managers. Moreover, some people in the longhouses also have their own farm such as oil palm farm, paddy farm, and pepper farm. Thus, it can give insights of their lifestyle which owned properties as others.

Nowadays, stereotyping views by some people towards those who are living in longhouses might still the same. They might think that people in longhouses are still left behind in many ways. However, it is different for those who living in the longhouses. There were paradigm shift in their life. Their developments were parallel with the development around them as they have easy access to the towns. Most of them owned many things, such as cars and televisions on their own without have to share with others.

1.2 Background of the study

Reading is one of the most important skills which a child should acquire and engage in besides listening, speaking and writing. Reading is crucial as it can be used by the children to deal with various reading materials as well as become one of their hobbies.

Besides as one of the tool of enjoyment or hobby, reading also can be used as a tool to travel all over the world. “Reading makes way for a better way of understanding of one’s own experiences and it can be an exciting voyage to self discovery” (Panigrahi and Panda, 1996; Eyre, 2005 as cited in Tella & Akande, 2007, p.118). It is because the children will hold information from their reading in their

memory. Therefore, it can be said that reading books would be able to enrich one's knowledge about many issues all over the world such as interesting places, sports and people.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education did a survey about Malaysian's reading habits more than 10 years ago. From the survey, the reading behavior of 22,400 individuals and 6,050 households revealed that only 20 per cent of Malaysians read regularly. The survey further stressed that the small figure included students who read just to pass exams" (New Straits Times, 1996 cited from Ambigapathy, 2001). The findings can be considered as a shocking revelation as it shows minimal percentage of Malaysian reading habits.

On the other hand, Nor & Amelia (n.d) stated that a recent survey by Malaysian National Library in 2006 with a sample of 60,441 respondents, found that the literacy rate has slightly decreased to 92 % from 93 % in 1996. There has been no increase in the amount of reading as compare to the past ten years.

Ambigapathy (2001) brought up the idea of reading *reluctancy*. Literacy and the motivation to read are related to each other. This is what Ambigapathy discussed in her writing which highlighted the situation where people who can read very well choose not to read. This phenomenon is what she calls "reading *reluctancy*". This phenomenon then led to the generation of non-readers. It is because adults are able to influence the children's reading habits by being a the role model for their children in reading.

In addition, Brown (1965, as cited in Basil & Fatimah, 2004) stated that people are largely influenced by those around them in term of the development of reading habits as "there always seems to be somebody, a role model, a respected figure (even if not personally known) who exemplifies positive reading habits" (p.2).

For that reason, a good role model which can make a good example is needed from the adults. Encouraging children's reading habits is important to help them to know the world through reading. At the same time, it also help to enhance and broaden their knowledge generally.

Reading habits are hindered by many factors such as the difficulty of getting the reading materials in term of the availability, accessibility and the sources of the reading materials. It is supported by the findings done by Tella & Akande (2007, p.118) which stated reading habits is disappearing because of the poor reading cultures generally and unavailability of reading materials. This is to emphasize the importance of availability of reading materials in order to empower reading habits especially among children.

Another factor that is found to hinder the children from reading is watching television. Sangkaeo (1999) highlighted that watching television is a reason of the declination of children's reading habits. It is because the children spent more time for entertainment programme in the television which is more interesting than reading books. The statement is supported by Yilmaz (2000), which reported that children who spend more time for watching television do not have reading habits. Consequently, they became non-readers.

Hence, one of the factors that are important in order to encourage the children to read is the availability of the reading materials. The focus of this study is on the reading habits of those children living in the longhouses in remote areas of Sarawak. The sources of their reading materials can be considered as very limited.

The limited sources the reading materials mainly from their schools, churches, parents, neighbours, and friends as well as from visitors that come into their longhouses for various reasons. For example, they can get pamphlets about health

from Health Department Personnel who come to longhouses especially in rural area and also pamphlets from tourists visit their longhouses.

Day & Bamford (2002 as cited in Tindale, 2003, p.50) mentioned that reading material for extensive reading is easy and also included variety materials of wide range topics. Besides, the purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding. Thus, in this study, the children's reading habits refers to reading for pleasure which is for the sake of fun.

Nevertheless, reading habits also can be related to children's achievement in school. They can either get good or bad achievement in school. Good achievement in school can be related to the children's reading habits. It is because reading can be very helpful for those children who like to read.

“reading can be helpful for the children when the appropriate action, key or stimuli is activated” (p.2). It is because “reading can help to develop the children's strategies for keeping information. This is related to the long term memory which the bunch of information would be pulled out of memory when it is needed. So, the children would be able to react accordingly to the situation occurred around” (p.17).

(Glazer & Searfoss, 1998)

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Ambigapathy (2001) mentioned that home is able to influence children's reading habits. It is including the parents as a role model for the children and the availability of reading materials. This is accordance to the study by Kubis (1996, as cited in Nor & Amelia, n.d) which indicated that students attribute their positive

attitudes toward reading to a significant event or person. Families play an important role in creating a positive reading attitude toward the children. A home literary environment created by the parent can influence their children feelings toward reading.

Malaysian education system is very exam-orientated (Primalani , n.d). This caused parent tends to have goals which set their children would score better in their exams. This led to very little time spend for other activities, especially reading, which it is not a priority. Thus, if there were parents who tried to develop reading habits among their children, they have to compete with attractions from growing and interesting television channels which make the effort to inculcate children's' reading habits becomes a harder task.

In addition, CopperWiki (2008) reported that research in Western countries over the last 50 years has indicated a fall in the reading habits of children, though there are country-to-country variations. The reasons for the declination in reading habits among children are due to which changes in family, social and economic conditions. The changes that took place caused reading are not considered as a relevant leisure activity as it does not form part of children's social interaction. Furthermore, children tend to spend more time with their friends than remain at home and read. Besides, the price of books also influence children's reading habits as some parents cannot afford to buy the books for them.

Hence, this present study is a survey research which involved the Iban children which living in the selected longhouses. It looked into their reading habits as well as their achievement or performance in academic in school.

As refers to this study, it is related to the location of longhouses where the children are living. Some longhouses are built near to rivers. Therefore, the children

tend to spend their time playing with their friends and playing in the rivers and might not spend much time for reading.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to find out the reading habits among children in Niah / Suai longhouses. Specifically, it investigated the amount of time spent for pleasure reading, availability or accessibility of reading materials, and the sources of the reading materials. Besides, the study focused on the types of reading materials the children like to read and the factors encouraging and holding back the children from reading. Moreover, the study also investigated the relationship of the children's reading habits with their achievement in school.

1.5 Research Questions

The research question questions for this study were designed based on the objectives of the study. The questions are:

1. How much time is spent for reading per day?
2. Are readings materials easily available to these children?
3. What are the sources of reading materials they depend on?
4. What types of reading materials do they prefer to read?
5. What are the factors that encourage or hold back these children from reading?
6. Do the children's reading habits affect their achievement in school?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The aim of the study is to find out the reading habits of children in longhouses. The findings will be supported by evidence gathered through five research objectives namely the amount of time children spend in reading, availability or accessibility as well as the sources of the reading materials, types of materials the children like to read and the factors encouraging and holding back the children from reading.

It is hoped to find in more details about the children's reading habits. Then, the findings would also hope to be able to provide further information with regards to currently availability, accessibility, and the sources of reading materials they have. Thus, the research objectives stated will highlight factors that encourage or hold them back from reading.

Moreover, it is also hoped that parents, schools, society and relevant authorities to be aware of these and able to give their supports in order to help encourage the children's reading habits. Apart from that, it is hoped that this research are able to convinced other researchers who have interest in reading habits among children to conduct further research of children's reading habits in longhouses. Therefore, better insights of what should be done to increase their reading habits can be developed.

Hence, it is also hoped that this study would be able to correspond to the other studies of children's reading habits. Thus, it would be helpful strengthens the empirical findings on children's reading habits in Malaysia.

1.7 Operational definition of terms

In this section, some of the terms used in this study are defined based on the purpose of this study.

1.7.1 Reading

Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written text in relation to the experiences and knowledge of the reader (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 1990, p.2). Reading in this study focuses on the act of reading from printed media such as books, magazines and newspapers and does not including the materials from internet. It is because the selected longhouses in the area do not have any access to internet service.

1.7.2 Reading habits

According to Sangkaeo (1999, as cited in Tella & Akande, 2007), reading habits refers to the “behavior which express the likeliness of reading of individual, which occur regularly of leisure reading approach, types of reading as well as the tastes of reading”.

1.7.3 Extensive reading

Extensive reading is generally associated with reading large amounts of reading materials. Bamford & Day (1997) stated that extensive reading is concerned with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the material. Readers are more concerned with the meaning of the text than the meaning of individual words or sentences. A reader selects what they want to read and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them. The reading is done outside the classroom and reading is its own reward as the purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding. Thus, this study focused on extensive reading for the purpose

of pleasure. It did not focus on academic reading which concerned with reading typically required for study.

1.7.4 Academic reading

Mokhtari & Sheorey (1994,p.52) defined academic reading as reading textbooks and other materials typically required for study. The reading materials that classified as academic reading materials are textbooks, research papers, journal articles, library books and other materials assigned for course work.

1.7.5 Non-academic reading

“ This type of reading classified into materials such as books, newspapers, magazines and any other materials unrelated to academic study” (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 1994,p.52).

1.8 Scope of the study

The study covers the frequency of time the children spend for reading, the availability or accessibility of the reading materials as well as the sources of reading materials. Moreover, this study will also look into the factors encouraging and holding back the children to read. Besides, the children's reading habits and their achievement in school also will be taken into consideration. This study will look into their achievement whether those who read more can perform better in their studies or vice versa.

However, this study will not look into other variables related to reading habits such as the children's place of study (school), the age group of the children and their gender.

1.9 Chapter review

This chapter focuses on the background of the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, the operational definition of terms, and the scope of the study. The following chapter is Chapter 2 which discusses the literature review or related findings for the study.